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PATTERNS OF BRAVERY
The Figure of the Hero in Indian Literature,
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Cagliari, Cittadella dei Musei – 14th-16th May, 2015

edited by
Tiziana Pontillo

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PREFACE

A first version of the contributions collected in this volume was presented at the Conference hosted by the Department of Philology, Literature and Linguistics of Cagliari in May 2015, under the title “Patterns of Bravery. The Figure of the Hero in Indian Literature, Art and Thought.” On this occasion, scholars from different countries participated in thought-provoking discussions with colleagues from analogous or different disciplinary fields, all of whom shared the same interest in Indological Studies and in particular in the cultural multifaceted picture of the history of Indian heroism from the Vedic age to the present day.

I should like to thank all the participants, the authors and the chair-persons for having taken part in this project and for kindly sharing every step of the Conference and beyond. My immense gratitude also goes to Prof. Jaroslav Vacek, who often generously led me in facing doubts and making decisions.

The majority of participants in this conference – whose programme is included at the end of the present volume – came from

1) Prague – *Seminar of Indian Studies*, Institute of South and Central Asia, Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic;

2) Cracow – *Institute of Oriental Studies*, Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland;

3) Milan – *Chair of Indology* of the Department of Literary, Philological and Linguistic Studies, Università degli Studi di Milano, Italy;

4) Warsaw – *Chair of South Asian Studies*, Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw, Poland.

In other words, these are the four European Institutions which, from 1998 onwards, have cooperated in the organization

of twenty Rotating International Indological Seminars, as can be seen e.g. on:

<http://dipartimenti.unica.it/filologialetteraturaelinguistica/files/2015/06/International.Indological.Co-operation.pdf>.

In fact, in Warsaw on 27 September 2008 the representatives of these Institutions signed a Letter of Intent – as regards a plan for Indological academic and research cooperation in the fields of common interest, even though, work had already started, albeit informally, in 1998. On behalf of the University of Cagliari's Philology, Literature and Linguistics Department, which was accepted as a new member of the group on 16th May 2015, that is to say, during the afore-mentioned Conference, I wish to express my gratitude to all the representatives for agreeing to our inclusion.

The other contributors to this volume hail from Lausanne, Moscow, Rome, Saint Petersburg, Tübingen, and Turin. Most of them have had some involvement in the three-year E.U./ R.A.S. Research Project "Traces of a Heterodox Concept of Kingship in Ancient, Medieval and Modern India" (2012-2015 – principal investigator: Tiziana Pontillo; partners: Giuliano Boccali and Cinzia Pieruccini – University of Milan; Pier Giorgio Solinas – University of Siena; Lidia Sudyka – Jagiellonian University of Cracow; Yaroslav Vacek – Charles University of Prague; official members of the research group: Cristina Bignami – University of Milan/ University of Turin; Danila Cinellu – University of Cagliari / University of Siena; Ewa Debicka Borek – Jagiellonian University of Cracow; Moreno Dore – University of Cagliari / University of Turin; Frank Köhler – Eberhard Karls University, Tübingen; Elena Mucciarelli – Eberhard Karls University, Tübingen; Chiara Neri – "La Sapienza" University of Rome). Furthermore, Chettiarthodi Rajendran from the University of Calicut, Kerala, who was unable to attend in May, also sent his paper as a contribution. On the contrary, a few papers have not been published in the present proceedings, as their authors failed to meet the early deadline.

The conference was financed by funds assigned by the Regione Autonoma della Sardegna, which allocated a part of

EU financial assistance to the subsidy of scientific research (with the promulgation of Regional Law 7 August 2007 n. 7) and thanks to funding from both the Department of Philology, Literature and Linguistics and the University of Cagliari. In this regard, my gratitude goes to our Head of Department, Prof. Ignazio Efisio Putzu, Vice Chancellor for Didactics and the former – Vice Chancellor for International Relations Prof. Giovanna Maria Ledda and the new Vice Chancellor for International Relations Prof. Alessandra Carucci.

Special thanks are also due to the English Lecturer at our Faculty of Humanities, who is really a dear friend of mine, Dr. Sally Davies, who patiently helped me and revised my English on several occasions, and to Gianni Lampis, Giulietta Masala, Sandra Masala, Francesca Oro and Roberto Reccia from our Department's Administrative Office, for their invaluable support before, during and after the Conference. Moreover I am also grateful to all the Students, ex-Students or super-Students of Sanskrit Language and Literature at the University of Cagliari, especially to Dr. Moreno Dore who shared responsibility for the whole planning of the Conference Programme – logistics included, and to Prof. Paola Pisano, who was active in promoting the Conference in the Press. Thanks also go to Diletta Falqui, Lucia Pinna and Dr. Rita Moi who were a precious help at the Conference Venue.

Moreover, it would have been impossible to carry out the double peer-review procedure, chosen by the Conference participants themselves, without the essential contribution of several scholars. Therefore, on behalf of all the authors, let me underline our deep gratitude for their precious suggestions, comments and corrections offered by the following assessors:

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2. Ravikumar AZHAGARASAN, University of Madras
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Paris

I am deeply indebted to Dr. Irma Piovano, Scientific Director of CESMEO (International Institute for Advanced Asian Studies) and President of the Editorial Committee of *Indologica Taurinensia*, who generously proposed to publish these proceedings as a dedicated issue of the prestigious *Indologica Taurinensia*, and also to the whole Editorial Board of this Journal, in particular to Dr. Victor Agostini who made everything possible with his legendary patience and competence.

Cagliari, November 5th, 2015

Tiziana Pontillo

Conference Programme



PATTERNS OF BRAVERY

The Figure of the Hero in Indian Literature, Art and Thought
Cagliari, Cittadella dei Musei – 14th-16th May, 2015

14th May, 2015, h. 14.20

IGNAZIO EFISIO PUTZU (Head of Philology, Literature and
Linguistics Department, University of Cagliari)
Opening Address.

Session I

Chair: **JAROSLAV VACEK** (Charles University of Prague)

DANUTA STASIK (University of Warsaw)
Immovable as Āṅgada: Īśvardāś's Āṅgad paij (1502).

ALESSANDRO BATTISTINI (University of Milan/ La Sapienza
University of Rome)
Cardboard weapons: the lexicon of warfare in the descriptions of
citrabandhas.

DAVID P. PIERDOMINICI (University of Milan/ La Sapienza University of Rome)
The Kavi as a Warrior: the Poetic Fight between Aruṇagirinātha Diṇḍima and Śrīnātha as an Image of Literary Changes in 15th Century Vijayanagara.

Session II

Chair: **LIDIA SUDYKA** (Jagiellonian University of Cracow)

BOŻENA ŚLIWCZYŃSKA (University of Warsaw)
Bravery of the Durātman Hero – the Figure of Rāvaṇa on the Kūṭiyāṭṭam Stage.

JOHANNES BRONKHORST (University of Lausanne)
Reflections on the fate of north-western Brahmins.

ALBERTO PELISSERO (University of Turin)
The semantic domain of *vīra* in Indian culture, from *Veda* to tantrism.

FEDERICO SQUARCINI (University of Venice)
Mahāvīra, Mahāpuruṣa, Mahājāna. On the normativity of exceptional figures.

15th May 2015, h. 8.30

Session III

Chair: **CINZIA PIERUCCINI** (University of Milan)

ANNA TRYNKOWSKA (University of Warsaw)
The Making of a Hero: Kṛṣṇa in MBh 2.30-42 and in Māgha's Śiśupālavadha.

DANIELLE FELLER (University of Lausanne)
The epic hero: between Brahmin and Warrior

FRANK KÖHLER (University of Tübingen)
The broken world of heroism. Reflections on the status of the hero in the *Mahābhārata*.

Session IV

Chair: **DANUTA STASIK** (University of Warsaw)

PAOLA ROSSI (University of Milan)

The sounds of the warrior: the Vedic drums between war and poetry.

YAROSLAV VASSILKOV (Russian Academy of Sciences, Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, South and South-West Asia)

The Indian hero in heaven and on earth: on the meaning of the word 'devaputra'.

PETTERI KOSKIKALLIO (University of Helsinki)

The art of flying: Aerial experiences of epic and puranic seers.

15th May 2015, h. 14.30

Session V - Chair: **JOHANNES BRONKHORST** (University of Lausanne)

MORENO DORE (University of Cagliari / University of Turin)

Indra-Bṛhaspati and the Atharvavedic 'consecrated warrior'.

CHIARA NERI (La Sapienza University of Rome) - **TIZIANA PONTILLO** (University of Cagliari)

The Apotheosis of the Hero in the Path to Salvation: *brahmabhūta* and some comparable phrases in Vedic and Sutta Piṭaka sources.

MARIA PIERA CANDOTTI (University of Lausanne) – **TIZIANA PONTILLO** (University of Cagliari)

Is the *garagīr* a hero's image? Reflections on the act of accepting (*pratigraha*).

Session VI

Chair: **ALBERTO PELISSERO** (University of Turin)

JAROSLAV VACEK (Charles University of Prague)

Tamil Sangam 'man of war' – his activities and aspirations.

ALEXANDER DUBYANSKIY (Lomonosov State University of Moscow)

Heroic behavior in religious movements (*bhakti* poetry in the South India).

LIDIA SUDYKA (Jagiellonian University of Cracow)

The Chejarla temple myth revisited: self-decapitation in early medieval Andhra.

EWA DEBICKA-BOREK (Jagiellonian University of Cracow)

The bravery of Sāḷuva Narasiṃha and the grace of Narasiṃha deity.

16th May 2015, h. 8.30

Session VII

Chair: **YAROSLAV VASSILKOV** (Russian Academy of Sciences, Peter the Great Museum of Antropology and Ethnography, South and South-West Asia).

LETIZIA TRINCO (La Sapienza University of Rome)

Heroes beyond the texts. Sacrifice, death and afterlife in the iconography of Southern Maharashtra's hero-stones.

CHIARA POLICARDI (University of Milan/ La Sapienza University of Rome)

Mastering oneself, encountering otherness: the itinerary of the vīra in the tantric Yoginī cult.

ANNA NITECKA (Jagiellonian University of Cracow)

Vīras in the Trika Śaivism of Abhinavagupta.

Session VIII

Chair: **ALEXANDER DUBYANSKIY** (Lomonosov State University of Moscow).

CEZARY GALEWICZ (Jagiellonian University of Cracow)

Patterns of Liminal Bravery: the Cāvers of Kerala.

ALEKSANDRA TUREK (University of Warsaw)

A Good Villain: the Bravery of Dacoits from the Śekhāvātī region of Rājasthān.

MARTIN HRÍBEK (Charles University of Prague)
Heroes from the margins in contemporary Bengali fiction.

SONA BENDIKOVA (Charles University of Prague)
Hero in the oral literature of the Kota ethnic group.

ALESSANDRO BATTISTINI

CARDBOARD WEAPONS: RUDRAṬA,
THE GODDESS AND THE ORIGIN OF *CITRAKĀVYA*¹

The genre of *citrakāvya* (“marvelous/ figurative poetry”)² has always enjoyed notoriety as the brightest example of how decadence in (Indian) literary taste looks like. The only serious and widely accepted attempt to read it in historical context and give reason of its origin has been attempted by S. Lienhard (1992; 1997) in a series of papers, and his conclusions were based essentially on the famous statement by Māgha (*Śiśupālavadha* 19.41), explicitly comparing his marvelous canto to the deployment of versatile armies:

viṣamaṃ sarvatobhadracakragomūtrikādibhiḥ |
ślokaiv iva mahākāvyaṃ vyūhais tad abhavad balam ||

¹ This paper was delivered at the Cagliari seminar with a different title, and focused on the lexicon of bladesmithing employed in descriptions of *āyudhabandhas* (“weapon-graphs”). Here, we will try a broader understanding of the whole phenomenon.

² The term is ambiguous and needs some preliminary remarks. It can indicate both word plays in general (riddles, palindromes, tongue-twisters) and pictorial stanzas in a narrower sense. In this second meaning, the terms *citrabandha*/ *bandhacitra* can be found. Indian rhetoricians are not consistent at all, and the most lucid definition is given by Bhoja in *Sarasvatīkaṇṭhābharaṇa* 2.109, classifying *citrakāvya* in six subcategories (comprising *bandha*). Rudraṭa does not make any distinction, and Namisādhū maintains the ambivalence stating: *citrasādṛśyād āścaryād vā citram*, “*citra* [is called thus] because of its similarity to a picture, or because of its marvel” (*Kāvyaālankāra* 5.1). In this paper we will try to respect the difference between the meanings, employing words such as “*bandha*, figurative poetry, *carmina figurata*” only when referring specifically to pictorial stanzas, and *citrakāvya* to marvelous poetry in general, that may comprehend *bandhas* as well. But the reader must keep in mind that a neat distinction is not always possible: *gomūtrikā* for example, that shares many properties with *citrabandhas*, is usually classified by Indian rhetoricians as a *gaticitra* (a game based on the direction of reading, as for palindromes).

“That army was difficult to seize because of *sarvatobhadra* (auspicious in all directions), *cakra* (discus), *gomūtrikā* (cow’s urine) and similar formations, as a *mahākāvya* because of such stanzas.”

The origin of figurative poetry lay then in the shapes of battle-formations (*vyūhas*). This hypothesis is strengthened by the fact that the *citra* sections in Bhāravi’s, Kumāradāsa’s and Māgha’s poems (*Kirātārjunīya* 15th *sarga*; *Jānakīharaṇa* 18th *sarga*; *Śiśupālavadha* 19th *sarga*) described battle scenes, and that the names of the three above-mentioned *alaṃkāras* were already contained in Kauṭilya’s *Arthaśāstra* (10.6) as names of specific *vyūhas*.

Lienhard’s assumption that poets referred to real “maps of the battlefields” as models for their pictorial stanzas is extremely fascinating, and deserves to be taken seriously. Still, it can be improved pointing out a series of facts: Bhāravi, the true trend-setter of war-scenes in *citra* style, did not say anything on his sources of inspiration. Since Māgha was trying to imitate and outclass Bhāravi in the structure of his poem,³ it may then be a pure consequence that he chose war as the subject of figurate stanzas, and worked out an effective simile. Moreover, no rhetorician has ever prescribed the employment of figurative poetry for such topic, despite pointing out battle scenes as a requisite for *sargabandhas*.⁴ What certain rhetoricians were actually prescribing, was to devote figurative poetry to God.

The Jain scholar Namisādhu (11th c.), commenting on *Kāvyālaṃkāra* 5.14 states indisputably: *yathā prāyeṇa citrasya devatāstutir viśayo na sarasaṃ kāvyam*, “As in the majority of cases, the subject of *citra* is the praise of a deity, not poetry with *rasa*.”

³ As for Kumāradāsa, whose main influence was anyway Kālidāsa, he knew the work of Bhāravi, and a stanza of his poem has been imitated by Māgha.

⁴ Daṇḍin, *Kāvyādarśa* 1.17.

A stanza from a lesser-known treatise by the vaiṣṇava devotee Kavi Karṇapūra (Bengal, 16th c.) provides the most suggestive image:

citraṃ nīrasam evāhur bhagavadviṣayaṃ yadi |
tadā kiñcic ca rasavad yathekṣoḥ parvacarvaṇam ||
 (*Alaṃkāraustubha* 7.214)
 “Some say *citra* has no *rasa*. But if it talks of God
 then it acquires some, like chewing the joints of
 sugarcane.”

This predilection for religion is reflected in the contents of some of the most famous *citrakāvyas*. The first and foremost piece of poetry entirely devoted to *citrakāvya*, Ānandavardhana’s *Devīśataka*, is indeed a hymn for the Goddess. The author himself admits the purely devotional inspiration of his work, claiming that he composed his prayer after the Devī in person appeared to him in a dream.⁵ This reflects Rudraṭa’s statement (*Kāvyaśloka* 1.9) that “certain poets have overcome the hardest difficulties, or recovered from sickness or obtained their dearest wish by resorting to the Goddess”.⁶ Other *stotras* (hymns) composed totally or partially in *citra* are Avatāra Kavi’s *Īśvaraśataka* (Kashmir, 17th c.), again a century of stanzas in praise of a deity, Vedānta Deśika’s *Pādukāśahasra* and Veṅkaṭādvārin’s *Lakṣmīśahasra*, devoting long sections to *carminā figurata*.

Other elements come from the language used by rhetoricians and commentators to describe and explain pictorial stanzas: the ‘instructions’ to draw pictorial stanzas employ very often the same technical lexicon of ritual and religious architecture,⁷ and

⁵ *Devyā svapnodgamād iṣṭadevīśatakasamjñayā | deśitānupamām ādhād ato noṇasuto nutim ||*

Devīśataka 101.

⁶ *Natvā tathā hi durgāṃ kecit tīrṇā duruttarāṃ vipadam | apare rogavimuktiṃ varam anye lebhire*

‘bhimatam ||. The passage is discussed by Ingalls (1989: 566).

⁷ See Battistini (forthcoming).

the graphic renderings of stanzas (*uddhāra/ prastāra/ nyāsa*) reflect the same language of *mantraśāstra* for the disposition of the syllables in *yantras* (sacred diagrams).⁸

This ‘mystic atmosphere’ of *citrakāvya* had been already pointed at by L. Renou (1978), followed by Lienhard himself, who referred very briefly to mystic and folkloric elements without exploring further their actual purport and possible implications, but recurring to the oft quoted sentence from *Aitareya Upaniṣad* 1.3.14: *parokṣapriyā iva hi devāḥ* “The gods love the cryptic”.

All these elements find place in the work of Rudraṭa (9th c.), the first rhetorician⁹ to treat *citrabandhas* with considerable length, providing both a general definition of the figure, an overview of its purport, and adequate original examples. For our analysis we can rely also on Namisādhu’s commentary, which provides us with deep insights. The Kashmirian author places *citra* among the *śabdālaṃkāras*, together with *vakrokti* (crooked speech), *anuprāsa* (alliteration), *yamaka* (cadence) and *śleṣa* (pun) (*Kāvyaālaṃkāra* 2.13) and devotes to it the whole fifth section of his treatise. After a definition of the figure and of its sub-categories (5.1-5.5), he exemplifies pictorial poetry in eight stanzas, from 5.6 to 5.13, leaving the remaining stanzas of the *adhyāya* to other varieties of verbal tricks.¹⁰

These *citrabandhas*, instead of being a mere collection of individual, self-contained stanzas, are instead conceived as a tightly unified cluster, both formally and in content: not only each of them depicts a different weapon,¹¹ but they can be ingeniously entwined together to create a big eight-spoke wheel (*aṣṭāracaakra*). As for their subject, they all contain invocations to the Goddess, described in her fierce aspect of

⁸ Rastelli and Goodall (2013) s.v. *nyāsa, prastāra*.

⁹ Daṇḍin’s otherwise bulky treatment of *citrakāvya* in *Kāvyaadarśa*’s third chapter does not comprehend *bandhas*.

¹⁰ Such as riddles and stanzas whose syllables are arranged according to the movements of chess. On the latter see Rajendran (1998).

¹¹ Except for stanza 13 (a plough).

Mahiṣasuramardinī, and repeatedly addressed as protector of rulers and dispeller of enemies. It is not improper then to read the whole set of stanzas as a real composition within the composition: a real *Durgāṣṭaka* hidden into an aesthetic treatise.

Turning to the other ‘capriccio for the Goddess’, it is significant to note that Ānandavardhana’s *Devīśataka* too contains in almost every stanza references to battles, supplications for victory and for the defeat of enemies, and that many of its stanzas are shaped in form of weapons (*cakra* “discus”, *jāla* “net”, *muraṇa* “battle-drum”, *tūṇa* “quiver”). As F. Hardy has hypothesized in an unpublished paper¹² it may well be that this *Century* had been composed in a period of severe crisis reflected in the poet’s words, or even commissioned by the king himself (at the time of Ānandavardhana, Avantivarman)¹³ as a prayer for protection for an impending war. This would seem another instance of the well-known association between the buffalo-slaying Goddess and military cults¹⁴ and here we will follow this track by asking a question: did *citrabandhas* play a role in this association?

To investigate this, we will first take into account one of the most iconic features of *citrabandhas*: that of *nāmāṅka* (“signature”). Starting at least from Māgha (*Śiśupālavadha* 19.120), composers of pictorial stanzas have often hidden within their *bandhas*¹⁵ their name and the title of their work, that could be extracted from syllables in strategical positions. The convention of signing *citrabandhas* has been explicitly prescribed for the first time by Rudraṭa (*Kāvyaśāstrakāra* 5.1), who recommended them to be “*sāṅkāni*” “having a signature”.¹⁶

¹² Hardy (unpublished). I am indebted to Prof. David Smith for this reference.

¹³ 855/856-883, See Kalhaṇa, *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* 5.34.

¹⁴ M. Biardeau (1981) discusses the topic in detail, with particular reference to the *śamī pūjā*. B. Sarkar (2012: 345-346) highlights the puranic myth in which Indra performs the lustration of Durga’s army after the defeat of Mahiṣa: this would be at the base of subsequent martial cults associated with the Goddess.

¹⁵ Usually *cakrabandhas*, placed at the end of *citrakāvya* cantos (in addition to Māgha’s example, see also Kumāradāsa, *Jānakīharaṇa* 18.87), or of whole compositions (Ānandavardhana, *Devīśataka* 101). A signed *padmabandha* (by Rājaśekhara) is quoted in Bhoja’s *Sarasvatīkaṇṭhābharaṇa* 2.294.

¹⁶ Namisādhū comments: *sahāṅkena svanāmacihnena vartanta iti sāṅkāni*.

Given the extremely difficult character of this poetry, it is no surprise that the authors felt the need to seal their efforts, and to employ additional ‘special effects’ in doing so.

But apart from copyrighting one’s creations flattering one’s pride, these poetic seals served also a different purpose. As Lokanātha Cakravartin points out,¹⁷ “in these [viz. *citrabandhas*] is repeatedly present the signature of the poet or of his teacher’s” (*eṣu kvacit kaver gurusmaraṇam gurunāmāṅkatā ca varīvartti*) and this is connected to the fact that “a large number of rhetoricians have prescribed that the use of *citrakāvyas*, despite being devoid of *rasa*, is acceptable with respect to the praise of gods, brahmins, teachers and kings” (*nīrasānām citrakāvyānām devadvijagurunripaprasastiparatve upādeyatvam upayogaś cālaṃkārikaiḥ subahubhiḥ svīkriyate*).¹⁸ Another testimony of the religious or eulogistic purpose of figurative poetry, and to the role *nāmāṅkas* played in this sense.

With this feature in mind we can then reconsider A.B. Keith’s (1920: 127) remark that “these tricks arose from the practice of writing inscriptions on swords or leaves”.¹⁹ Such practice finds confirmation in material evidences²⁰ and is abundantly testified in literary sources as well:²¹ *nāmāṅkita śaras*, “signed arrows” seems to have been shot by a great number of literary heroes. These signatures testified the romantic concern for the code of honor in battle (*yuddhamaryādā*), that didn’t want a warrior to die ignoring his vanquisher.

¹⁷ Commentary to Kavi Kaṇṇapūra, *Alaṃkāraustubha* p. 273.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 274.

¹⁹ The reference to leaves could give reason of the *padmabandhas*, on which see Cielas (2013).

²⁰ Almost every collection of Indian weapons displays inscribed swords. To restrict to our sources, Sivaramamurti (1940: 158) bears the example of arrows (from the Madras museum) sealed by one of the Tanjore Rājas, Sarabhoji.

²¹ Sivaramamurti (1940) and Pusalker (1941) list 12 instances (five from Kālidāsa’s works). Examples cover the epics, classical poetry and theatre, and present the form *svanāmācīhna*, *nāmākṣara*, *nāmāṅka*.

Getting back to religion: can we trace any instance of a concrete connection between (inscribed) weapons and the Goddess? We can jump to Modern India and take as an example possibly the most famous sword of Indian history, a weapon that was actually named after the Goddess herself: King Śivājī's sword Bhavāni.²² This sword, gifted to the king by his allies, the Sāvants of Wadi, was thought to be pervaded by the *kuladevatā* of the royal family (the goddess Tulajā Bhavāni), and to be endowed with special powers, such as to take life in dreams.²³ After having won the king many victories, and having been sung in innumerable *bakhars*,²⁴ it finally went lost within donations and loots between Śivājī's heirs, Aurangzeb and Great Britain's museums, and its actual whereabouts are uncertain. What we know for sure is that Bhavāni was kept on the altar of the Goddess and 'received back' by the king every year on the occasion of Vijayādaśamī, the day in which military campaigns were traditionally set forth at the beginning of autumn. This festival²⁵ (to be held on the 10th day of Āśvina's waxing moon) concluded the celebrations of Durgā Pūjā, and was traditionally associated with the victory of the Devī against Mahiṣāśura. Its main features were the worship of the 'invincible' divine forms of Aparājitā, Jayā and Vijayā,²⁶ and most notably the *āyudha pūjā*, an offering of lamps to the king's weaponry and army.²⁷ The purpose of this *pūjā* was overtly to secure the king success in battle, as can be evinced also by the *āśīrvāda* ("benediction") allegedly uttered by him while reviewing his troops:

caturaṅgabalaṃ mahyaṃ niraritvaṃ vrajaty iha |

²² On the Maratha king (who reigned between 1674 and 1680) and his sword: Sardesai (1927), Edwardes (1924) and Gode (1940).

²³ Westerns reader might recall the episode of Excalibur, bestowed to King Arthur, and taken back by the Lady of the Lake.

²⁴ Marathi historical narratives.

²⁵ Details and complete scriptural sources in Kane (1958: 188-194).

²⁶ These appellations are widely present in the *Devīśataka*.

²⁷ An earlier (poetic) description of this very same ceremony, called *vājinīrājana* ("horses' lustration"), is found in Kālidāsa, *Raghuvamśa* 4.24-25.

sarvatra vijayo me 'stu tvatprasādāt sureśvari ||²⁸
 “May my fourfold army here have no enemy,
 may I enjoy victory everywhere through your grace,
 Sureśvarī!”

As for the shapes in which the Goddess was to be actually approached, two puranic texts inform us that on the occasion of Durgā Pūjā, the devotee “could worship the Goddess Mahāmāyā in the shape of *līṅga*, book, altar, sandals, statue, picture, trident, sword, and water”;²⁹ and again “as a piece of cloth and a sacred diagram”.³⁰

Can we suppose then that such tridents and swords, as the sacred diagrams,³¹ were engraved with auspicious mantras and formulas? Looking at Rudraṭa’s *citrabandhas*, we are induced to answer affirmatively: his *śūlabandha* for example, constructed so that the prongs display three auspicious words (*stuhi* “sing”, *śivā* “favours/ Śivā”, *siddhyā* “with success”)³² and the *śarabandha*, with the head bearing “*sadrasa devīm sannama*” (“O good devotee, pray the Goddess with all your heart!”) provide a fascinating image of how such inscribed weapons could have looked like. Another element pointing to the possibility that these *bandhas* were being inspired by real inscribed models is their relatively realistic and accurate shape, as reflected also by Namisādhū’s use of technicalities in describing their parts.

As for the presence of a plough in Rudraṭa’s *aṣṭaka*, we prefer not to take it as a simple show-off of poetic virtuosity, but, if our assumption is reasonable, to link it to the presence of farming tools at the lustration ceremony, as can be evinced by

²⁸ Kamalākara Bhaṭṭa, *Nirṇayasindhu* p. 671.

²⁹ *līṅgasthām pūjayed devīm pustakasthām tathaiva ca | sthaṇḍilasthām mahāmāyām pādukāpratimāsu ca* || *Kālikā Purāṇa* quoted in Kane (1958: 178).

³⁰ *citre ca trīśikhe khaḍge jalasthām cāpi pūjayet. Garuḍa Purāṇa* quoted *ibidem*.

³¹ But also the sandals: an example of *pādukābandha* can be found in Vedānta Deśika’s *Pādukāśahasra* 949.

³² At the base of the prongs is “*tām*” “her”, so that the play could also mean “sing her (for favors) with success”.

the brief mention by Kane (1958: 193) of the “worship of [...] implements of one’s trade”.

To sum up: the association between the Goddess and military cults in ancient and mediaeval India can be literarily documented in a span of time ranging at least from the *Mahābhārata* up to Śivājī’s times. Few hints lead to suppose that one form of this martial devotion to the Devī, out of one’s piety or on special festivities with royal patronage, took the form of praising her (along with other deities) with pictorial stanzas (Ānandavardhana’s *Devīśataka*, Rudraṭa’s *Durgāṣṭaka*). This usage might have originated with, or simply have been influenced by, a specific habit of writing inscriptions on the weapons and other paraphernalia used in such cults. In a way, this hypothesis saves also Lienhard’s theory: the poet could have taken his inspiration from these ritual for weapon-shaped stanzas, and from military formations for (the naming of) *gomūtrikās*, *sarvatobhadras* and *cakrabandhas*.

We are aware of the high possibility of failure intrinsic to theories relying on scanty literary evidences, and it is quite very likely that our attempt here would turn out to be not the final answer to the question “Where does *citrakāvya* come from?”, if such an answer exists. Our method consisted in following feeble traces scattered in the most different sources, belonging to a variety of genres and often separated by centuries. In this we have been led only by the fact that certain aesthetic thinkers underlined the connection between *citra* and *stuti* (“praise”). This is why we really hope that art historians, archaeologists and experts in Indian ritual would take on the issue of engraved weapons and confirm or deny our assumptions. In any case, we would be satisfied if we will have managed to show that *citrakāvya* can be approached with the same degree of attention as any other poetic genre or device, without prejudices based on old-fashioned aesthetic values. *Citrakāvya* deserves to be studied historically and philologically: and this can shed new light not only on poetic matters, but to Indian cultural history in general.

Appendix: Rudraṭa's "Durgāṣṭaka" (Kāvyālaṃkāra 5.6-14).³³

tatrāṣṭabhiḥ ślokaḥ
garbhīkṛtakhaḍgādivasturūpāntaraiś cakram āha –

There he has composed a wheel with eight *śloka*s having the shapes of a sword etc. hidden inside:

mārāriśakrarāmebhamukhair āsāraramhasā |
sārārabdhastavā nityaṃ tadartiharaṇakṣamā || 6 ||
mātā natānāṃ saṃghaṭṭaḥ śriyāṃ bādhitasaṃbhramā |
mānyātha sīmā rāmāṇāṃ saṃ me diśyād umādiḥ || 7 ||
khaḍgabandhaḥ || (yugmam)

May Umā, mother of the world, whose hymn is sung vehemently, like a shower of energy, by Śiva, Indra, Rāma and Gaṇeśa, grant me peace. She is always capable of dispelling their pains. She is like a mother for the devotees, and a treasury of riches. The fear of the devotees has been destroyed by her. Worthy of worship, she is the non plus ultra of beauties.

Namisādhu: [...] *anena saṃdānitakena khaḍga*
utpadyate | ādyaḥ ślokaḥ phalarūpo 'paro muṣṭirūpaḥ |
'sā' śabdaḥ phalānte taikṣṇyākārī 'diḥ' iti muṣṭer upari
'mā' śabdau atra sādharāṇau | [...]

With this *saṃdānitaka* is produced a sword. The first stanza has the shape of the blade, the second the shape of the hilt. The word *sā* has the shape of the edge at the end of the blade. *Diḥ* is above the hilt, and the two words *mā* are in common.

atha musaladhanuṣṭ –
 Now a pestle and a bow:

³³ The *aṣṭaka* is actually composed of nine stanzas: eight forming the *cakrabandha* plus one left out, but essential to complete the final *viśeṣaka* (triplet of stanzas syntactically linked).

māyāvinam mahāhāvā rasāyātām lasadbhujā |
jātalīlāyathāsāravācam mahiṣam āvadhīḥ || 8 ||
musalam ||
mām abhīdā śaraṇyā mut sadaivārukpradā ca dhīḥ |
dhīrā pavitrā samtrāsāt trāsīṣṭhā mātā ārama || 9 ||
dhanuḥ || (yugmam)

O mother, give up [other occupations]³⁴ and protect me from fear. You have slain Mahiṣa, supreme delusion, proud, whose voice was too high. But your blandishment is great. You are playful, and so your arms play. You instill bravery and afford shelter. You are blissful, always bestowing health. And you are intellect, you are brave and pure.

Namisādhū: [...] *atrādyāślokena musalam – madhye tanu pāśvayoh sthūlam ekatra prānte tīkṣṇam | tatra madhye ‘vārasā’ ity akṣaratrayaṁ sādharmaṇam ante ‘jā’ iti | dvitīyāślokena dhanuḥ – tatrādyam ardham kuṭīlam vaṁśabhāge, dvitīyaṁ guṇākāram ‘mā’ śabdo ‘dhastanakoṭiprānte, tadupānte ca makāro dvirāvṛtti, ‘dhī’ śabdaś ca śikhārūpaḥ | [...]*

Here from the first *śloka* is a mace. In the middle is thin, in the two ends is thick, and at the end in one point is sharp. In the middle the three syllables *vārasā* are in common and so *jā* above. With the second *śloka* a bow: the first half is bent in the part of the bamboo; the second half has the shape of the string; the word *mā* is at the end of the lower edge, and next to that “*ma*” is repeated twice, and the word *dhī* has the shape of the head.

atha śaraḥ –
 Now an arrow:
mānanāparuṣaṁ lokadevīm sadrasa sannama |
manasā sādaram gatvā sarvadā dāsyam aṅga tām || 10 ||
|| śaraḥ ||

³⁴ Namisādhū: *ārama vyāpārāntarān nivartasva.*

O [tender heart, soaked in the] juice of good devotion,³⁵ give yourself up and praise unconditionally the goddess of the world. With your mind, with every effort: her anger is pacified through worship.

Namīsādhu: [...] *atra prathamapādena daṇḍaḥ, dvitīyena phalam, tṛtīyacaturthābhyām vājāv aṭanī ca* | [...]

Here with the first *pāda* is the shaft, with the second the head, and with the third and fourth the feathers and the notch.

atha śūlam –
Now the trident:

mā muṣo rājasa svāsūṃl lokakūṭeśadevatām |
tām śivāvāsitām siddhyādhyāsitām hi stutām stuhi ||
II || śūlam ||

O man of passion, don't delight in your life. Sing instead the deity of the kings of the masses of men. Invoked by Śiva/screamed by jackals,³⁶ praised by the world, she sits with success in the highest abode.

Namīsādhu: [...] *trīśikham etena śūlam utpadyate | prathamam ardham daṇḍabhāge dvitīyaṃ tv āvartaparāvartaiḥ śikhāsu | tatra sarvaśikhāmūle 'tām' śabdo vārapañcakam uccāryate | śikhāyām ekasyām 'śivā', dvitīyāyām 'siddhyā', madhyamāyām 'stuhi' | nyāsaḥ ||* [...]

With this is produced a trident with three prongs. The first half is in the part of the shaft, and the second in the prongs with continuous repetitions. There at the base of each edge the word *tām* is uttered five times. In one edge is *śivā*, in the second *siddhyā*, in the middle one *stuhi*.

³⁵ Namīsādhu: *aṅgeti komalāmantraṇe | he sadrasa subhaktibhareṇārdraḥṛdaya*.

³⁶ Namīsādhu: *śivena śambhunā vāsitām āhūtām śivābhir vā vāsitām kṛtakalakalām*.

atha śaktyādīni –
Now a spear etc.

māhiṣākhye raṇe 'nyā nu sā nu nāneyam atra hi |
himātaṅkāḍ ivāmuṃ ca kaṃ kampinam upaplutam || 12
|| śaktiḥ ||
mātaṅgānaṅgavidhināmunā pādaṃ tam udyatam |
taṅgayitvā śīrasy asya nipāty āhanti raṃhasā || 13 ||
halam ||
itīkṣitā suraiś cakre yā yamāmam amāyayā |
mahiṣaṃ pātu vo gaurī sāyatāsisitāyasā || 14 ||
rathapadam || (viśeṣakam)

May Gaurī, the slayer of demons who depend on their long swords, protect you. In battle she was beheld by the gods: “Is it her or someone else? Yes, who else can stand here in this battleground?” and sent Mahiṣa to hell without tricks. That vile, trembling as for the strokes of winter. She kills him, intoxicated with pride, as playing with an arrogant elephant: raising her glorious foot, moving it around, casting it with violence on his head.

Namisādhu [...] atrādyaślokena madhyatanvī tīkṣnaprāntā
śaktir utpadyate | tatra 'himātaṃ' ity akṣaratrayaṃ madhye,
'nusā' adhaḥ, 'kaṃ' upari | tatra 'hi' dvirāvṛttiḥ,
'mātaṃnukaṃ' ete dvirāvṛttayaḥ | dvitīyaślokena halam | tatra
halapraviṣṭeṣāśalyabhāge 'taṃ' śabdaḥ, 'mā' tasya prṣṭhe,
'nāmu' phalatīkṣṇāgre, 'gānaṅgavidhi pādaṃ tamudya' varṇāḥ
phale 'nulomavilomaśreṇidvayasthāḥ, 'gayitvā śīrasy asya'
itīṣāyām, 'nipātyā' halordhvabhāge, hakāro halordhvabhāge
kīlikāśalyamadye, hakārordhve 'nti', hakārāgre 'raṃ',
hakārapṛṣṭhe 'sā' | mārāripramukhair ebhir aṣṭabhiḥ ślokair
aṣṭāraṃ cakram utpadyate | atra pūrvārdhāny aṣṭārāḥ |
antyārdhāni tv ekā nemiḥ | 'mā' śabdo nābhiḥ sarvasādhāraṇaḥ
| ardhāntyaślokāntyākṣarāṇi ca³⁷ | atra ca cakre

³⁷ The passage is corrupt. It must mean that the last syllables of the first halves are the same as the first syllables of the second halves, and coincide in the spokes' junctions to the

svanāmāṅkabhūto 'yaṃ ślokaḥ kavināntarbhāvito yathā –

*'śatānandāparākhyena bhaṭṭavāmukasūnūnā |
sādhitaṃ rudraṭenedaṃ sāmājā dhīmatāṃ hitaṃ ||' [...]*

Here with the first *śloka* is made a spear, thin in the middle and sharp at the end. The three syllables *himātaṃ* are in the middle, *nusā* below, and *kaṃ* above. Among these, *hi* is repeated twice, and *mātaṃnukaṃ* are repeated twice.

With the second *śloka* the plough. There the word *taṃ* is in the part of the peg of the beam entering the mouldboard, 'mā' is behind that, 'nāmu' is in the sharp edge of the share, the letters *gānaṅgavidhi pādaṃ tamudya* stay in two rows back and forth in the mouldboard, *gaitvā śirasyasya* are in the beam, *nipātyā* are in the mouldboard's upper part; *ha* in the upper part of the mouldboard in the middle of the peg of the yoke, above *ha* is *nti*, in front of *ha* is *raṃ*, and behind *ha*, *sā*.

With these eight *ślokas* beginning with *mārāri* is made an eight-spoke wheel. The first halves are the eight spokes, the second halves are one rim and *mā* is the hub, common to all.

And here in the wheel, this *śloka* has been inserted by the poet:³⁸

"This has been accomplished as a benefit for connoisseurs by Rudraṭa Śatānanda, son of Bhaṭṭa Vāmuka, chanter of the *Sāma Veda*."

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rim.

³⁸ The four pādas of this *nāmāṅkaśloka* are obtained respectively from the 3rd, 7th and 11th syllables of each spoke (starting from the hub), and from the junctions' syllables.

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